

training for the post of Phone Mechanic but have not been given appointment and pay scale till date; and

(c) by when Government would give appointment and pay scale to those phone mechanics who have completed their training?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) and (b) The number of vacant posts of Phone Mechanic (now re-designated as Telecom Mechanic) is 6873. The number of such employees who are trained and waiting for their appointment as Phone Mechanic are 34553.

(c) It is planned to fill up the vacant posts progressively during the current financial year. The balance-trained personnel would be adjusted as and when new vacancies arise. In the interim, arrangement already exists for payment of Rs.40C/- on completion of six months after passing the post training examination, Rs.60(y- on completion of one year and Rs. 1000/- on completion of each subsequent year of waiting.

Conditions for Granting Licences

•547. SHRI P. K. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to impose stringent conditions for granting licences to companies which want to start new airlines in the country; and

(b) if so, the details of conditions laid down by Government in this regard alongwith the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHARAP YADAV): (a) and (b) In 1997, policy on domestic air transport services' was approved by the Government. In accordance with this policy, barriers to entry and exit from the domestic air transport services sector have been removed and there is only a pre-cntry. scrutiny of applications to verify the financial soundness, maintenance, security and safety aspects of operations and human resources development proposed to be undertaken by the applicant airline. Further, to eliminate non-serious entrepreneurs and to achieve economics of scale, the minimum fleet size for a scheduled operator has been fixed at 5 aircraft and the minimum amount of the

shareholders fund at Rs. 10.00 crores and Rs.30.00 crores for operators of aircraft of all-up-weight below 40,000 kgs. and above 40,000 kgs., respectively. Detailed requirements for grant of permit to start new airlines for operating scheduled domestic air transport services have been issued by the Director General of Civil Aviation *vide* Civil Aviation Requirement, Section 3, Air Transport Series *C Part II dated 10th December, 1999.

Opening of office by Ms Mekaster Group abroad

•548. SHRI ANANTRAY DEVSHANKER DAVE: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is necessary to obtain the permission of Reserve Bank of India under Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) before opening of offices abroad by Indian companies;

(b) if so, whether Ms. Mekaster Group, Ansal Bhavan, New Delhi, have opened their overseas office at San Diego, 92124, California (USA) without the approval of appropriate authorities; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and action taken against the Mekaster Group for violating laws?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) No Sir. Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, 1973 (FERA) has been repealed and replaced by the Foreign Exchange Management Act 1999 (FEMA) since 1st June, 2000. Under the repealed FERA, authorized dealers were delegated power to permit opening of overseas offices abroad by Indian companies/exporters in terms of provisions contained in Chapter 9B 1 of Exchange Control Manual 1993. Only cases which did not meet this criteria, were required to obtain prior permission from the Reserve Bank of India.

(b) While Reserve Bank of India has not granted any approval to Ms Mekaster Group, Ansal Bhavan, New Delhi, for opening of overseas office at San Diego, California, USA, factual position in this regard i* being ascertained from the Indian Embassy, Washington.

(c) Does not arise.